

REMARKS

Claims 38-62 and 101-105 are now pending in the application. Claims 38 and 105 are the only independent claims.

Claim Objections

The Examiner objected to claims 46 and 71. Claim 71 has been canceled and claims 45 and 46 have been amended in a manner that is believed to overcome the objection raised by the Examiner with respect to claim 46.

35 U.S.C. § 112, Second Paragraph

Claims 47, 50, 53 and 54 have been amended to overcome the § 112, second paragraph rejections. Claim 63 has been canceled. It is respectfully submitted that all claims, as amended herein, are fully definite.

Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. §§ 102,103

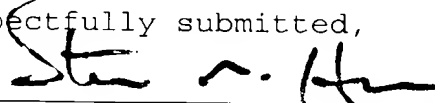
The rejections that relate to the canceled claims are not addressed herein. Independent claim 38 stands rejected according to 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,491,556 to Fujii et al. (Fujii). Claim 38 has been amended to include the feature that the thickness of the integral peripheral region of the mat increases progressively from an inner edge of said region towards an outer edge of said region. An example of this structure is shown in FIGS. 1, 4 and 5 of the drawings and suitable dimensions for embodiments of this structure are included in the table found on page 7 of the disclosure. As described, e.g., at page 3, line 14 and page 5, lines 11-13 of the disclosure, this results in a mat having a reinforced edge which reduces the likelihood of tearing. As further disclosed, e.g., at page 5, lines 13-15, this progressively thickened peripheral region allows

for the thickness of the backing layer in other locations to be advantageously reduced.

In contrast, Fujii discloses a mat wherein the thickness of the peripheral region is substantially uniform over most of its width, but then decreases at the outer edge of the peripheral region. As such, in Fujii, the thickness of the peripheral region does not increase progressively from the inner edge to the outer edge of that region as recited in amended claim 38. The thickness of the peripheral region in Fujii is not therefore greatest at its outer edge, where tears are most likely to start. Further, with Fujii, because the peripheral region has a uniform increased thickness over a majority of its width, much more rubber is required to product the mat. The mat disclosed in Fujii cannot be manufactured in a hot press since there is only a small outward flow of rubber during the pressing operation, which would be insufficient to form the thick peripheral region of the mat. The Fujii mat is suitable for production by injection molding at much higher pressures, which is not a suitable process for the production of tufted pile mats owing to the problem of pile crush.

In light of the foregoing amendments and remarks, it is respectfully submitted that claim 38 is in condition for allowance along with claims 39-62 and 101-104 that depend directly or indirectly therefrom. New claim 105 is also submitted to be in condition for allowance for at least the reasons discussed above in connection with claim 38.

Respectfully submitted,



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Encl.: Version with Markings to Show Changes Made

VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

IN THE SPECIFICATION

The specification has been amended as follows:

Page 1, immediately after the heading "Cross-Reference to Related Application" the paragraph has been amended as follows:

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This application [claims priority from] is a continuation of U.S. application Ser. [no.] No. 09/029,402 filed February 26, 1999, now U.S. Patent No. [_____] 6,187,245, which [claims priority from] is a section 371 National Phase application based upon PCT international application no. PCT/GB96/02105 filed August 27, 1996, which, in turn, claims priority from British Application No. GB9517921.4 filed September 1, 1995.

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IN THE CLAIMS

The claims have been amended as follows:

Claims 21, 22, 24-32, 34-37 and 63-100 have been canceled without prejudice.

Claims 38, 39, 45-47, 50, 53 and 54 have been amended as follows (all claims are shown for ease of reference):

21. canceled

22. canceled

24.-32. canceled

34.-37. canceled

38. (Amended) A mat [having] comprising a fabric layer and a rubber backing layer bonded together, in which the rubber backing layer has an integral peripheral region that extends beyond the fabric layer, and [the] a thickness of said integral peripheral region increases progressively from an inner edge of said region towards [the periphery of the mat]an outer edge of said region.
39. (Amended) A mat according to claim 38, wherein the thickness of said integral peripheral region approximately doubles [towards the periphery of the mat]from said inner edge of said region to said outer edge of said region.
40. A mat according to claim 38, wherein the fabric layer includes a pile fabric.
41. A mat according to claim 40, wherein the fabric layer includes a tufted pile.
42. A mat according to claim 41, wherein the tufted pile is cut, looped or both.
43. A mat according to claim 38, wherein the fabric layer includes a synthetic fibre.

44. A mat according to claim 43, wherein the synthetic fibre includes polyamide, polyester, polypropylene or a blend of two or more of those fibers.
45. (Amended) A mat according to claim 38, wherein the fabric layer [includes] comprises at least one of a natural fibre or viscose.
46. (Amended) A mat according to claim 45, wherein the natural fibre comprises [includes] cotton[, viscose or a blend of those fibers].
47. (Amended) A mat according to claim 38, wherein the fabric layer has a weight in the range 300-1200g/m²[, preferably approximately 640g/m²].
48. A mat according to claim 38, wherein the fabric layer includes a woven or non-woven substrate.
49. A mat according to claim 48, wherein the substrate includes polyester or polypropylene.
50. (Amended) A mat according to claim 48, wherein the substrate has a density in the range 70-300g/m²[, preferably approximately 100g/m²].
51. A mat according to claim 38, wherein the rubber backing layer includes a natural or synthetic rubber material.

52. A mat according to claim 51, wherein the rubber backing layer includes a nitrile or SBR rubber material, or a blend of those rubber materials.
53. (Amended) A mat according to claim 51, wherein the rubber backing layer has a hardness in the range 35-75 IRHD[, preferably approximately 60 IRHD].
54. (Amended) A mat according to claim 51, wherein the rubber backing layer at all locations including said integral peripheral region has a thickness in the range 0.5-3.0mm[, preferably approximately 1.01mm].
55. A mat according to claim 51, wherein the rubber backing layer includes surface formations in the form of raised projections and/or indentations.
56. A mat according to claim 55, wherein the surface formations provide cleats, a pattern and/or a logo.
57. A mat according to claim 51, wherein the rubber backing layer includes perforations.
58. A mat according to claim 51, wherein the rubber backing layer has rounded corners.
59. A mat according to claim 51, wherein the rubber backing layer has a concave edge.

60. A mat according to claim 51, wherein the rubber backing layer has a clean edge.
61. A mat according to claim 38, wherein the integral peripheral region has a width of approximately 2cm.
62. A mat according to claim 38, wherein the dimensions of the mat are approximately 120cm x 80cm.
63. - 100. canceled

New claims 101-105 have been presented for examination as follows:

101. A mat according to claim 38, wherein the fabric layer has a weight of approximately 640g/m².
102. A mat according to claim 48, wherein the substrate has a density of approximately 100g/m².
103. A mat according to claim 51, wherein the rubber backing layer has a hardness of approximately 60 IRHD.
104. A mat according to claim 51, wherein the rubber backing layer has a thickness of approximately 1.01mm.
105. A mat comprising:
 - a fabric layer;
 - a rubber backing connected to the fabric layer, said rubber backing layer comprising an integral peripheral region that extends outwardly from and beyond the fabric layer, said integral

peripheral region defining a thickness that increases progressively from an inner edge of said region located adjacent said fabric layer toward an outer edge of said region that defines an outermost peripheral edge of said mat.